Response by the Management team to the accusations made in ‘The New Arab’

Carla Hagemann
Corporate Spokesperson | Head of Corporate Communications

Veröffentlicht 10.1.2025

An article in online magazine "The New Arab" makes accusations against DW for how it has handled Islamophobic statements

In an article that published on January 7, 2025 by online magazine “The New Arab”, DW was accused of not taking decisive action against Islamophobic statements. The Management team explains its position on the matter.

Dear DW colleagues,

In light of the concerns that recently appeared in an article in *The New Arab* regarding our handling of islamophobia and antisemitism accusations at DW, we would like to explain the internal processes and related decisions in greater detail. We recognize how important this topic is and understand how it can influence the level of trust among our colleagues. That’s why it is important to us to address these accusations openly and transparently.

The internal processes at DW are designed to treat complaints in accordance with legal and ethical standards. In the case of the complaint regarding Islamophobia, the options and available resources were thoroughly verified and considered by Compliance in coordination with other internal entities.

Decisions on individual cases may not always be easy to understand from outside DW. We of course consider many aspects that cannot be explained publicly due to confidential personal rights.

Culture of trust and common values

Ever since the 2021 antisemitism accusations, we have worked hard to determine how we can create a culture of trust within the organization that is based on a set of common values. As a direct consequence of the accusations, we implemented a 10-step action plan at DW.

The Code of Conduct was drafted and was made available not only to the entire organization, but also to the public. We have created tools making it possible to submit (anonymous) tips about any violations of our values.

The Editor-in-Chief published guidelines for fundamental journalistic principles and official wordings for important topics including (but not limited to) those pertaining to Israel and the Palestinian territories.

Dealing with the accusations was also and remains a learning process for us all. We have learned from the implemented measures and the judgments that the labor courts have made since then and continually developed our standards.

Since the introduction of the Code of Conduct, the processes for handling possible violations have been standardized. Cases involving private social media posts or public expressions of opinion are evaluated as follows:

- The posts and the entire social media presence are verified for their compatibility with our Code of Conduct, with our values and with the impartiality that is required of all journalists as well as in terms of the extent to which the violations could harm the reputation and legitimate interests of DW.
- Other factors that are taken into account include how old the posts are and the overall impression of the social media presence.

Regardless of how it is evaluated, a response is always obtained from the person that is affected with the goal of gaining a complete understanding as to whether they share our values. Subsequently, the appropriate measures for each individual case are decided.

Each case is taken individually and must be carefully considered on its own merits. Often, those tasked with the evaluation ask additional in-house or external experts for support.

Confidential discussions instead of pressure from bad press

For our journalistic product, as well as on the personal level between employees or in meetings: freedom of expression is precious to our society.

Already in 2021, Peter Limbourg emphasized that we should be critical of the Israeli government and society in our day-to-day work as journalists – exactly the way we would with the German government and with all governments from around the world. It goes without saying, that this has not changed.

In that respect, we are convinced that criticizing any religion is justified and important. That goes for Judaism as well as for Islam or Christianity. Here, we must differentiate between (legitimate) objective criticism and unacceptable discrimination or hate towards religions.

Religions play a central role around the world and hold great meaning for many people. This comes across in our coverage and is an important pillar of how we interact with each other and of our values. Islam contributes just as much as Christianity or Judaism or Buddhism and Hinduism do to peace and reconciliation in the world.

We want respectful, transparent, cooperative and trusting interaction at DW. In the past years, DW has established a number of instruments and teams that employees can turn to if they would like to report a

violation of the DW values. These include the DW Whistleblower Tool, the digital SafeSpace platform (sensitive topics can also be addressed here anonymously), the Antidiscrimination Officer and the Compliance Officer.

We reject all forms of discrimination!

To make it abundantly clear: we reject Islamophobia just as much as we reject antisemitism or any other form of discrimination.

At the same time, we would like to emphasize that sending anonymous e-mails to a large distribution list or going to the press are not suitable means for calling attention to issues. External press coverage or escalation will not change how internal processes operate, but can damage DW's image and that of our dedicated employees. Very often, these kinds of communication infringe on the privacy of others.

We would like to remind you that employees in Germany have a secondary obligation in their contracts to uphold and protect their employers' interests. Disclosing internal processes can amount to a breach of duty that can lead to disciplinary actions, especially if the employees make sensitive information public.

Disagreeing with an employer's decision does not release employees from this obligation.

Therefore, the first way forward should always be to: Use the anonymous Whistleblower Tool or go directly to your manager. DW will investigate all tips.

Compliance also reacted immediately to the case in question. However, Compliance will never communicate details from discussions that are held or measures that are taken to whistleblowers if legitimate interests oppose this communication.

Allow us to emphasize: We as DW will not do anything differently or spring into action because a case has found its way into the public eye. We protect our values, regardless of whether we do it with or without media attention.

The Management team has every confidence in DW employees. Whether they are from Programming, DW Akademie, DMT, Directorate General or Business Administration: We are a diverse and open media company.

At DW, we pride ourselves on having employees with various religious backgrounds. Diversity of opinions, world views and orientations makes us a strong and credible media company.

Your Management team